

Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees

**Minutes of Regular Board Meeting**

**Library-Conference Room**

**1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14305**

**Wednesday, September 28, 2022**

**CALL TO ORDER.** The regular meeting of the Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees was held in person on Wednesday, September 28th, 2022, in the Conference Room 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Main Library.

The meeting was called to order by Board President Carmen Granto at 3:12 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present

Ms. Bailey

Dr. Foote (via zoom)

Mr. Granto

Mr. King

Absent

Ms. Glaser

Dr. Rahman

Also present were Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, Mr. Pat Brown, PT Finance Manager-Library, Mr. James Roscetti, Library Attorney, Ms. Cecilia Driscoll, Librarian 1 and union steward, Ms. Courtney Geerhart, Librarian 1 Local History. Mr. Robert DiFrancesco, Friends of the Library was absent.

**OPEN HEARING.**

Mr. Granto noted there were no other guests or speakers.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA.**

Mr. Brown noted that one item was added under new business (Compu-Mail annual appeal to be discussed by Ms. Bailey). The agenda was adopted upon a motion by Mr. King, seconded by Dr. Foote and carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

The August 31, 2022 regular meeting minutes were presented and reviewed. Adopted upon a motion by Mr. King, seconded by Ms. Bailey, was carried unanimously.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS.**

Mr. Brown reported on the July 31, 2022, financial reports consisting of operating and special revenue fund balance sheets, income and expense reports with comparison to budget and prior year and Dunlap Trust balance sheet. He provided a detailed narrative analysis to supplement the financial reports, which was included in agenda packet, explaining balance sheet amounts, revenues and expenditures for operating fund and shared that the cash and financial position of the Library is good and there are no unusual accounts payables or liabilities. Being the 7th month of the year expectation would be generally for most revenues and expenses to be about 58.3% of budget (7/12 of budget) if budget evenly spread over the year but noted some items in both revenue and expenses come in once and not evenly throughout the year. The Library is operating within budget for 2022 but still early in the year and he will be taking a very close look at the revenues and expenses over next couple of months to get a better estimate/forecast for year end.



Actual total revenues are about 51.5% of budget excluding unbudgeted grant revenue and budgeted rent income and fund balance neither of which will have any actual revenue. City revenue funding is within expectations for 7 months, transfer of \$18k from Dunlap trust has not yet been made, county aide will come in September so no actual amount as of July and state funding comes in later in the year so no actual amount for it either as of July. Library charges, passport fees, Friends of the Library and annual appeal are not meeting budget expectations but annual appeal really begins in November. Total expenses of \$1,143,764 or about 52.9% of budget after adjusting out rent expense; the largest expense is payroll and benefits total payroll is about 52.7% of budget with full time at 58.6% and part time at 41.4% of budget respectively or about \$44k under budget for 7 months all in part time but this savings will be reduced some with planned hiring of 2-4 part-time employees in coming months. Health insurance benefits for employees and retirees are both within budget (retiree health benefits is about \$27k under budget), library and office supplies, operational, maintenance and utilities combined are all under budget for the first six months by about \$80K for 7 months. Utilities are about 46.1% of budget showing a savings of \$14k over 7 months. As in past years, spending for books and materials has been cut back in May-July and is being evaluated to meet the purchasing needs for the fall and winter.

Mr. Brown explained that the 2022 budget called for the use of \$120,823 of fund balance which means the budget was developed with the understanding that expenses may exceed revenues or operate in the red by this amount. While it is too early to estimate, it appears that the Library should be well within this amount by year end. The operating deficit as of July 31, 2022 is \$66,942 and on an annualized basis estimate would be about \$114,758. Revenues from the state and county of \$186k and \$18k from Dunlap Trust are not reflected in this amount since they are received later in the year but based on current trends they should more than offset the deficit by year end. County aid received in September of \$59,596 was \$7,404 or 11% less than budget. He also added that for the first 7 months of 2022 total revenue were \$3,721 higher than same time in 2021 primarily due to city and grant revenues \$24,283 lower and \$26,335 higher respectively than 2021 due to timing of city and grant funding requests and expenses are \$36,049 higher than 2021 primarily due to grant expenses of \$35,794 not incurred in 2021. Without grant expenses in 2022, total expenses as of July 31, 2022 vs July 31, 2021 would be \$255 higher for 7 months. 2021 ended the year with a surplus of \$200,490 while budgeting to use \$84,681 of fund balance. The Library budgeted to use \$120,823 of fund balance (operate in the red) for 2022 and is operating within budget; revenues and expenses will be reviewed over next couple of months to get a better estimate/forecast for year-end but does expect to operate within budget given the current trends. Mr. Brown said he does not see any major areas of concern as of July 31, 2022.

The acceptance of the July 31, 2022 financial reports was adopted unanimously as presented upon a motion by Ms. Bailey and seconded by Mr. King.



## **EXECUTIVE LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT.**

Ms. Potwin shared some of the items from her written report which was included in the agenda packet.

### **Upcoming Holiday Closures and Director time off**

The Library will be closed:

- Monday October 10-Indigenous People's Day
- Friday November 11-Veteran's Day
- Wednesday November 23-Main to close at noon for Thanksgiving
- Thursday November 24-Thanksgiving
- Saturday December 24-Christmas Eve
- Monday December 26-Christmas Day (observed)
- Saturday December 31-New Year's Eve Main to close at noon
- Monday January 2, 2023-New Year's Day (observed)

Ms. Potwin was off Friday September 16 (personal day) and Wednesday September 21 (sick day) and will be off Friday October 28<sup>th</sup>, staff has contact information and encouraged to reach out to me if needed.

### **Community Annual Report**

- The 2021 report is finished, Mignon will be mailing copies to local government officials as well as those individuals who have donated above the \$100 threshold.

### **Meetings attended and upcoming**

- A list of meetings attended or to be attended by the Library Director from Aug. 31-Nov. 5 was provided.

### **FY 2023 Budget**

The proposed budget reviewed with the City follows the directors notes and said she would appreciate board members lobbying city government in support of the budget which reflects an increase in city funding of \$89,400 (5%) over 2022 but reflects removal of property insurance of \$52k. If the insurance is not removed from the budget, funding will have to be increased. Original budget proposal requested increase of city funding of \$175K. State mandated maintenance of effort (MOE) and impact on Library's funding has to be emphasized with the City.

### **FY 2022-LLSA money**

Since not all Nioga member libraries' annual reports have not been approved, Nioga has not received the 2022 funds as of Sept. 2, 2022.

### **Mayor Restaino photo op**

Event to mark the occasion of the Local History inventory project completion is planned for Wed. Oct. 12 @ 1pm with the Mayor present. Board Members are invited to attend; event is being planned by the Mayor's office. The Mayor has invited Senator Ort, Assemblyman Morinello and the local press.

### **SAM Grant \$50,000**

All paperwork has been submitted to DASNY, still awaiting news as to reimbursement.



## **Newsletter**

Mignon is working on a newsletter for the Fall and Winter months.

## **Dunlap Money**

Mr. Brown is in the process of setting up a "parking lot" account with M&T Bank however M&T is not being very proactive. We are also looking into setting up this account with Bank on Buffalo as a temporary measure until the Dunlap Board arrives at a decision to use/invest these funds. Presently the funds are in a checking account at Northwest Bank (designated ORRIN E DUNLAP TRUST) but the check signors are outdated on the account with only Granto and King on the account and two signatures are required. Instead of renewing the check signors at Northwest and given past issues with the bank it was decided at the August 31, 2022 meeting to close this account and transfer the funds to the new account being established. Mr. Brown and Ms. Potwin are also researching a bank charge of \$92.07 to the Dunlap account on July 29, 2022 but the bank will only speak with check signors. Every attempt is being made to close the Northwest account and transfer these funds to either M&T or Bank on Buffalo. Check signers will have to go to the bank, produce drivers license, social security #.

## **Niagara County Funds FY 2022**

County funds have been received Sept. 22, budgeted amount was \$67k and \$59k was received. A letter was sent to Legislator Chris Voccio in hopes he can lobby for an increase next year.

## **Rebello Bequest**

Ms. Potwin has been working with Mr. Roscetti to obtain monies left to the library as part of the last will and testament of Mr. Rebello, a local NF citizen who passed away Feb. 2020. His lawyer is Mr. Boniello and he cannot attend the meeting of Sept. 28 as planned. Ms. Potwin will be meeting with Mr. Boniello on Fri. Sept. 30 @ 11 am to pick up the check and sign off on the release. She doesn't have the exact amount of the check but it is approx. \$675k. Mr. King had asked about such a donation previously which neither Mr. Brown or Ms. Potwin were aware that this was what he was referring to.

## **NYS Library Construction grants**

NIOGA has \$905,000 in grant funding allotted to them out of the State total of \$34 million for all libraries during this cycle (2022 year). Two grants were delivered to Nioga on Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>:

- Main Library refurbishment of Auditorium seating and flooring (\$135k)
- LaSalle ADA openers (\$3k)

## **Other Items:**

History Associates archivists' time has come to an end as of Sept. 23 and will have a deliverable inventory report by Sept. 30 which will be shared with the board via e-mail. Project leaders will be attending the Dunlap meeting of Oct. 26 to go over the report and answer questions and soliciting your feedback to add as an appendix to the report with final report delivered by Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>.

- Librarian trainee Joe Malek has been kept on from summer months to aid in cataloging the inventory 10 hours/week from Sept. 1-Dec. 31)
- Elise Lia has been offered temporary employment for 17 hours/week to also assist in cataloging



Ms. Potwin expressed disappointment that the archivists ran out of time to catalog the local history book collection. Therefore, we hired Lillian Kennedy who will work as an independent contractor for 10 hours/week from Oct. 11-Dec. 31 to assist with this work. Ms. Kennedy works with NIA so she is aware of the collection and deadlines.

To summarize, Courtney will have additional help as follows to complete the inventory project:

- PT Library Trainee Malek- 10 hours/week until Oct. 31
- PT Library Trainee Lia-17 hours/week Oct. 11-Dec. 31
- Contractor Kennedy-10 hours/week Oct. 11-Dec. 31

Ms. Potwin said we will continue to operate the Local History department by appointment only until Dec. 31 and asked board members not to disturb the archivists and catalogers as their time is scheduled with specific benchmarks to reach. Any questions please make an appointment with the Local History Dept. as time is of the essence and they don't have time to discuss other matters. Reference questions that are not immediate in nature will have to wait until January 1, 2023. Ms. Potwin's end goal is to have a web-based searchable Past Perfect catalog with the entire local history collection available throughout the website, stored securely in the cloud by December 31, 2022.

Monthly reports for August adult, youth/childrens departments activity and meeting room use followed the directors report.

#### **Comments and Questions on Directors Report:**

Mr. Granto asked if digitization is next after cataloging and if so how much time and cost will that be. Ms. Geerhart said it depends on what is to be digitized and have to categorize what digitization is to be done but should have information by end of the month. Mr. Granto asked for this information and estimate of digitization time and cost for the next meeting.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments for the Director. With no further comments or questions the Executive Library Director's report was received and filed

#### **PERSONNEL REPORT.**

The report provided the names, positions, term of employment of four-part time employees and contractor for Local History. Mr. Granto asked what the expected cost of the new temp hire is and if it is in the budget, Ms. Potwin said approx. \$4k and yes there is money available in temporary payroll budget line.

The acceptance of the personnel report was adopted as presented upon a motion by Mr. King, seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried unanimously.

#### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Granto said he didn't have a report but is happy that the Local History inventory project is winding down and that a complete inventory report will be available for review at October meeting which will provide information to assist the board in it's decision for the next steps for the Local History Department.



## OLD BUSINESS

- a) Noreen Kim Hill Scholarship request to establish criteria was not discussed as Mr. DiFrancesco was not present and was to obtain more information from the NF Educational Foundation.
- No action taken item tabled. (7/27/22, 8/31/22, 9/28/22)

## NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution to open new checking account for Orrin E Dunlap Collection Trust Funds. The Ex. Library Director and PT Finance Manager requested the closing of the Northwest Bank checking account for Dunlap funds and transferring all funds to either M&T Bank or Bank on Buffalo with the exact same account name as exists on the Northwest account. Check signors on the account will be:

- Carmen A. Granto
- Don J. King
- Judie Glaser
- Dr. Chandra Foote

At the time of the meeting, paperwork for neither bank was available as they require a resolution from the board designating the bank as the depository. Ms. Bailey asked if there was an advantage going to Bank on Buffalo vs. M&T since M&T has all other library bank accounts. Mr. Brown said Ms. Glaser had suggested looking at Bank on Buffalo as the school district uses them and they are very pleased with their service and initial contact/dealings with both showed Bank on Buffalo much more responsive and proactive than M&T. After some discussion, Mr. Granto suggested that the decision be left up to a committee of Sarah Potwin, Pat Brown, Attorney Jim Roscetti and Treasurer Judie Glaser.

### Resolution:

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve the committee and it's decision as to which bank to set up this new account. The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Foote, seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried unanimously.

- b) Resolution to close the Northwest Bank checking account for Orrin E Dunlap Collection Trust and transfer all funds to the new checking account as outlined in a above.

### Resolution:

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve the closing of the Northwest Bank checking account for Dunlap funds and transfer all funds to the new checking account per a above. The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Foote, seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried unanimously.

- c) Assignment of Rebello estate bequest funds donation as Committed fund balance for Local History Project Mr. Brown said that this just sets aside or assigns/designates funds for said uses and may be changed or removed anytime by the Board. The funds are not being spent and not in a separate bank account but is allocating a portion of unreserved fund balance; these funds remain part of the total fund balance and may be changed/completely eliminated by the board at any time.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any restriction on the Rebello donation. Ms. Potwin, Mr. Brown and Mr. Roscetti all said they were not aware of any restrictions that it was to be used as required by the Library as the board deems necessary.

**Resolution:**

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve assignment of Rebello donation/bequest as committed for Local History as explained. The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Foote, seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried unanimously.

- d) Compu-Mail estimate proposal for annual appeal preparation and mailing services totalling \$4,479.65 with postage was discussed by Ms. Bailey who is working on the annual appeal with Ms. Glaser and Mignon Freeman. Compu-mail has provided these services in the two previous appeals and it is being recommended that the library use them again.

**Resolution:**

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve Compu-Mail estimate for services relating to the annual appeal. The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Dr. Foote and carried unanimously.

Mr. Granto went around the table asking all in attendance individually if they had any additional comments, questions on the agenda or other issues/matters they wished to discuss. Courtney Geerhart reminded everyone that History Associates will be at the Oct. 26 Dunlap meeting to review their inventory report.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Granto moved for executive session at 3:46 seconded by Mr. King. The executive session ended at 4:31 pm and went back to regular meeting.

**NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT.**

The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled for Wednesday October 26, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. in-person Main Library Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The next Dunlap Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday October 26, 2022 at 2.30 pm in person, Main Library Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

Meeting adjourned at 4:34 pm on a motion by Mr. Granto, seconded by Mr. King, and carried unanimously.



Recorded by: Patrick D. Brown  
Patrick D. Brown, P.T Finance Manager-Library  
Approved by: Don King  
Don King, Secretary